

# In Pursuit of Excellence: A Model of Collaboration for Nurses at Hawaii State Hospital

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*In 1989 the Hawaii Medical Journal devoted an issue to the status of mental health in Hawaii and mental health leaders in the State criticized the lack of involvement by the University of Hawaii<sup>1,2,3</sup>. This paper is written in response to the challenge and will discuss a dynamic model based on collaboration between the Hawaii State Hospital (HSH) and the School of Nursing of the University of Hawaii (SoN), that was implemented in September 1990. Since the publication of Magnet Hospitals. Attraction and Retention of Professional Nurses<sup>4</sup> there has been much interest by service organizations in defining the factors that build excellence<sup>5</sup>.*

## Background

In 1974, HSH lost its accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). One of the reasons cited was the shortage of nursing staff. Since 1986, Hawaii has ranked 51st in the nation in terms of the quality of care and services delivered in the public sector to the disenfranchised who suffer severe forms of mental illness<sup>6</sup>. The United States Department of Justice (DoJ) examiners continued to monitor the mental health system and services at HSH, which they found alarmingly deficient in terms of the settlement agreement<sup>7,8</sup>.

Mental health is a major public health issue. Alarming statistics indicate that 1 in 5 Americans at some point in their lives will suffer from a mental disorder<sup>9</sup>. Though many mental health professionals work within the private sector, strong evidence indicates that the public sector's responsibility will be focused more on the seriously and persistently mentally ill (SPMI): The growing number of the homeless and those in trouble with the law, and the frail elderly. Probably >10,000 people fall into the category of SPMI<sup>10</sup>. These populations are considered to be difficult to work with at best. It is not surprising therefore that attracting qualified compassionate staff to provide the proper services continues to be a major challenge.

In Hawaii, lack of adequate training and education of staff have been cited in both external and internal reviews to be among the problems of our mental health system in general and HSH in particular<sup>6,11,12</sup>. There is a need not only to recruit, but also to retain qualified and prepared staff.

The problem with the shortage of psychiatric nursing personnel is well documented<sup>13,14,15,16</sup>. Nurses represent the largest group of the professional core providing mental health care in the country and the largest group practicing in state mental hospitals. In 1984, 31% of all employed psychi-

atric nurses were working in public mental hospitals (nurses, N=14,873, psychiatrists, N=3,665, social workers, N=3,935, psychologists, N=1,461). In 1987 in the U.S., there were slightly more than 50,000 professional psychiatric nurses<sup>17</sup>. Kramer projected a need to double this figure by 1990 if each patient in need of psychiatric services was to receive 6 hours of psychiatric nursing care a year<sup>14</sup>.

Because of the current and projected shortage of nurses, aggressive efforts to attract nurses into the field of mental health need to occur. At the same time, preparation of the nursing staff now employed at HSH is necessary so that staff can assume the roles and functions dictated by changing trends.

Fox, speaking at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) workshop on "The Changing Roles of Nurses in State Hospitals", emphasized the need for collaboration between universities and mental health systems<sup>17</sup>. She encouraged working together in mutual support, since both university schools and public mental health systems have difficulty with the recruitment of nurses. She suggested that nurses who want degrees could be attracted to state hospitals if established programs and rewards for obtaining educational degrees were available in situ. Faculty also need research facilities, support and access to clinical nursing staff to identify and discuss appropriate research questions.

"Staff will respond positively to being involved in research and they will want to work in a facility where something is happening in nursing. The state hospital becomes a vehicle for professional advancement and a supplier of students. The university can be used to enhance the commitment of employees to the state hospital by enriching the work experience and providing educational programs for advancement"<sup>16</sup>.

## R & R at HSH

A Recruitment and Retention (R&R) project that addressed the education, training and recruitment needs of nursing staff at HSH was developed by faculty members of the University of Hawaii's SoN to assist in correcting reported deficiencies within the nursing-care delivery system. The Department of Health Behavioral Health Administration funded the 3-pronged project which focused on: a) Advanced education for nursing staff; b) consultation; and, c) continuing education courses for staff. This project was initiated in September, 1990.

## The goal

*The overall goal is to improve the quality of nursing care provided to the seriously and persistently mentally ill patients at Hawaii State Hospital by creating a learning*

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*community within the hospital setting.*

"Learning communities" are a result of deliberate restructuring of the nursing curriculum so that students are actively engaged in an academic relationship with other students and with faculty over a longer period of time than is possible in the usual traditional courses<sup>18</sup>. Other characteristics of learning communities include strategies to maximize student-centered learning, a sense of family environment, commitment to lifelong learning, and a greater level of personal interaction between students and faculty. The need to be creative in choosing teaching strategies that enhance different learning styles is well documented in the teaching and learning literature<sup>18,19,20,21</sup>.

#### **Advanced education for nursing staff**

The first component of the project provides for nursing staff to continue their formal education within the University of Hawaii system. Employed nurses return to school to complete baccalaureate and master degrees in nursing, working reduced hours and receiving full pay. Nursing staff have enrolled for the first time in general education courses at community colleges with tuition paid by the grant. A payback clause has been formulated which expects 2 years of continual employment for each year of academic support.

Fifty of the nursing staff at HSH have been involved in this component. Three have completed their degrees and currently 20 are enrolled in University classes.

#### **Nurse specialists consultation/clinical**

The second prong provides 5 Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) who have joint appointments at the SoN. They provide services 80% of their time to selected in-patient units at HSH. Role-modeling of clinical skills and expertise in psychiatric nursing is the major focus of this group. In addition, 4 other CNS provide weekly consultation services to the staff at HSH. Two of these nurses are also Advanced Nurse Practitioners who focus on the medical services provided to the patients at HSH.

These nurse specialists work closely with the Nurse Executive Group to develop the foundation of practice of psychiatric nursing for HSH. The CNS participate in Quality Management, Policies and Procedures, and Peer Review; these are standing nursing committees that work on operationalizing the Standards of Psychiatric Nursing for practice at HSH. They also participate in hospital interdisciplinary committees.

The CNS also work with the nursing

staff on the hospital units to integrate and adapt the materials developed by working committees.

#### **Continuing education**

The final prong consists of education classes for nursing staff at HSH. Courses have been developed to meet the determined needs of the nursing staff. The CNS develop and teach courses in pharmacology, leadership and management, contemporary psychiatric nursing, group dynamics and the therapeutic use of self on the part of paramedical assistants. These courses are repeated several times a year making them available to all interested staff (22 courses have been offered to date).

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An evaluation form was developed in consultation with staff development personnel for use in all classes offered at HSH.

A data base is maintained for analysis, feedback to instructors and critical evaluation by the department.

Purchase of educational computer-assisted instructions, videotapes, texts and journals enhance the continuing education offerings and support the principles of adult learning.

### Coordination and administration of the project

The chief of the department of nursing at the HSH is on the faculty of the SoN and is assigned as the nurse manager to HSH for 80% of his or her time. As a nurse-leader, the chief guides the development of a nursing philosophy needed to build the morale of the nursing team and establish a therapeutic milieu. He or she is responsible for planning, organizing, and implementing all the nursing activities at the Hospital. The chief provides leadership in developing policy and procedures, standards of care and quality assurance indicators. He or she meets and reports to the Administration at HSH and generates quarterly reports to the Department of Justice.

The mental health educator coordinator (MHEC), 50% Full Time Equivalent administrator/principal investigator is on the faculty of the School of Nursing. She directs all aspects of the project in collaboration with the nursing administration at HSH. The MHEC recruits, advises and supports students throughout the course of their studies and acts as a resource for all staff at HSH interested in higher education. She coordinates the CNS group and provides a communication link between the hospital community and the Hawaii Council of Psychiatric/Mental Health Clinical Nurse Specialists, which acts as an advisory board to the project. The MHEC provides expertise and consultation to the staff development program at HSH.

The rationale for this position is based on the belief that application of acquired knowledge and skills is integrated into practice and results in delivery of care if the educator facilitates and supports the process in the actual work milieu.

### Evaluation

A long-term study was designed to examine educational factors that have an impact on nursing recruitment in a public state hospital. Specifically, 4 questionnaires were constructed to measure outcome goals and criteria of the R&R project which relate to an environment conducive to: a) Learning from expert consultants (CNS); b) obtaining higher education; and, c) participating in continuing education.

*Time 1* (April 1991) data were collected at 9 months into the project to provide information as a basis for continuation and modification of the project. This evaluation occurred 6 months after the DoJ settlement with the State of Hawaii and allowed time for the change process to be established.

*Time 2* data were collected in November, 1992 and are being analyzed. The results will be ready for publication by the end of 1993.

This indeed is a time of great challenge and change for the staff of the entire HSH. The intent of the University of Hawaii and the Department of Health collaborative project is to assist the nursing staff in assuming leadership, executive and therapeutic roles, that are necessary for the successful transformation of Hawaii State Hospital into a fully accredited institution of care, teaching, learning and research for the seriously and persistently mentally ill.

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